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Official Records

26th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 7 October 2003, 3 p.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Kirn (Slovenia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 124 *(continued)*

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

The Acting President: Before we turn to the items on the agenda for this afternoon, I should like to inform members that since the issue of documents A/58/360 and Add.1, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of that information?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: That information will be reflected in document A/58/360/Add.2, to be issued tomorrow morning.

Agenda items 60 and 10 *(continued)*

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/323)

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/58/1)

Mr. Rodríguez Parilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Millennium Declaration states, "We ... have gathered ... to reaffirm our faith in the Organization and its Charter as indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world" (*resolution 55/2, para. 1*). It continues, "We have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level" (*para. 2*), and declares, "We reaffirm our commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which have proved timeless and universal" (*para. 3*).

The illegal war in Iraq has made everything more clear. In similar times, in 1999, in the Assembly Hall, the Cuban delegation said that

> "under conditions of a unipolar and neo-liberal world order; under the economic and military dictatorship of a super-Power; and given the imposition of a single model, the nuclear club, the offensive military doctrine of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the so-called global threats, countries being relegated to the 'Euro-Atlantic periphery', the financial blackmail against the United Nations, the tyranny of some permanent members of the Security Council and the Council's double standards; the crippling of the General Assembly; and the ways that political selectivity and manipulation applied to human rights issues — in view of all this, it would be

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suicidal to endorse the right to global intervention ..." (*A/54/PV.32, p. 2*).

Two wars later, it is obvious that the system of international security constructed after the Second World War, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and reflected in the Millennium Declaration, has been permanently destroyed.

In addition, there are now even more dangerous concepts: the "Nuclear Posture Review" — the review of the national security doctrine of the United States; that country's announcement that it is willing to act against threats emanating from the territories of more than 60 countries; our countries of the third world being labelled "obscure corners of the planet"; the defining of so-called new threats and combinations of threats — new forms of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; so-called armed and unarmed threats; and the preventive use of force, including on the territory of other States.

There is no doubt that the world today is more dangerous and less secure that it was in 1999 or other years before the criminal acts of 11 September 2001. There is no doubt that the United Nations has become more irrelevant, that some seek to declare the United Nations Charter obsolete and that a de facto world dictatorship based on the use of force is being established.

As is well known, Cuba's position is that the system of collective security, regulated in the Charter and governed by the central role of the United Nations, must be restored, not discarded. The General Assembly must now reaffirm, as it did in the Millennium Declaration, the full validity of the Charter, whose purposes and principles, including the principles of the sovereign equality of States, respect for the political independence of nations and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, must be applied without restriction.

It should be reiterated that States must refrain from the use of force and threatening to use force and in every case, must strictly abide by the provisions of the Charter and serve only the common interest. We should defend multilateralism, which presupposes full respect for international law and democracy in international relations.

The Security Council's primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security must be restored with full respect for the United Nations Charter. There must be profound reform of its procedures, including the use of the veto, and an expansion of its membership, among both permanent and non-permanent members.

The General Assembly must resume its broad powers under the Charter, including those derived from paralysis of the Security Council, to reject the use of force to achieve political objectives and to emphasize that only peaceful settlement of disputes can lead to security, stability, justice and democracy throughout the world.

The Millennium Declaration must be implemented to the fullest extent concerning the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, in order to reduce the part they play in security doctrines and policies, and to halt their development and stockpiling. We must also refrain from developing new highly lethal conventional weapons and from the militarization of outer space.

As for the Millennium proposals and challenges, the blockade against Cuba has been strengthened, and its extraterritorial effects have expanded. The manipulation of Cuban purchases of foodstuffs from the United States to show that the blockade has been partially lifted has done nothing but show the genocidal nature of this blockade, which three years after the Millennium Summit still includes medicine and food.

As stated in the Millennium Declaration,

> "only through broad and sustained efforts to create a shared future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity, can globalization be made fully inclusive and equitable. These efforts must include policies and measures, at the global level, which correspond to the needs of developing countries ...". (*resolution 55/2, para. 5*)

It further states that "We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty ..." (*para. 11*).

The meagre — still unfulfilled — commitments and numerous conditionalities adopted at Monterrey, the empty promises of Doha and the recent failure in Cancún do not seem to be in keeping with the aforementioned appeal. For every miserable dollar of official development assistance, six dollars of debt service is extracted from a debt that continues to grow.

The gap between the North and the South has widened, and the digital divide is growing as well.

No group of States, whether rich or poor, will be more secure in a world where 800 million people go hungry, where 1.2 billion live on less than a dollar per day and where 115 million children, three fifths of them girls, do not have access to education. There are 876 million people in the world who are illiterate, two thirds of whom are female. More than 11 million children die each year from preventable diseases, and more than 500,000 women a year die in pregnancy or in childbirth. Of the 42 million people who suffer from HIV/AIDS, 39 million are from the developing world. Tuberculosis and malaria cause 3 million deaths each year; one out of every five individuals does not have access to drinking water; and 2.4 billion human beings do not have proper sanitary facilities. Is this the Millennium Declaration's international partnership for development?

Africa needs financing from the former colonial Powers, not prescriptions or advice. There will be no peace, security or stability without development. There will not even be any prosperity for the affluent societies if there is no development in the countries of the South.

Under the unjust, exclusive and unsustainable international order that afflicts us, with an international financial architecture that aids in the plundering of our countries, the Millennium Goals are pure fantasy.

Solutions are feasible. The debt, which has been repaid many times over, should be cancelled. The promise to devote 0.7 per cent of gross national product to official development assistance must be kept. Resources must be made available from the sale of arms, from speculative financial transactions and from advertising in order to meet the overwhelming needs of the developing countries. Agricultural subsidies in the countries of the North must end. Monopolization of the intellectual property of medical resources essential to life must end.

What has happened with the Kyoto Protocol on climate change? What progress has been made since the World Summit on Sustainable Development took place in Johannesburg? Deterioration of the environment associated with irrational consumption by the industrialized countries means that the rich and the poor will be left with a common fate.

In the Millennium Declaration we promised that

> "We will spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development." (*para. 24*)

The General Assembly must appeal for cooperation and constructive dialogue to promote and protect all human rights, which are indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and should be enjoyed by all individuals and peoples. It should undertake concrete action to find peaceful solutions to international humanitarian problems, in strict compliance with the principles and norms of international law and international humanitarian law.

The politicization of human rights is nothing new in the proceedings of the Commission on Human Rights. It is unfair to criticize the developing countries for defending their concepts, rights or legitimate interests. Politicization was imposed long ago by the developed countries which, as a bloc, promoted double standards, selective approaches and unequal treatment on the basis of their political agendas, their narrow national interests, and sometimes even because of the foreign demands that most of them have themselves endured.

Industrialized countries that are truly interested in fruitful dialogue and in settling disputes and problems in the area of human rights by means of cooperation, as called for in the Millennium Declaration, must understand that those who support hegemony will also affect their own interests.

The treatment of the subject of human rights in the section of the report of the Secretary-General on peace and security, specifically with regard to sanctions, seems to acknowledge that the Security Council exercises functions that in fact belong to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and absolutely not to the Security Council.

Democracy and civil and political rights have also fallen victim to the so-called global war against terrorism. In addition to the crisis in the political system, the lack of credibility of politicians and abstention in elections in industrialized countries, there is now irrefutable data on the manipulation of information and public opinion and on the exclusion of citizens from the decision-making process in Governments that supposedly represent them.

The Cuban delegation supports the proposal to organize a United Nations conference in 2005 to review in full the implementation of the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration, in the hope that this would be a second opportunity to fulfil the Goals.

Ms. Enkhtsetseg (Mongolia): My delegation wishes to commend the Secretary-General on his thought-provoking reports on implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (A/58/323) and on the work of the Organization (A/58/1). Mongolia associates itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

As seen in the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/58/323), the results of the first three years have been mixed and uneven. For every goal, whether relating to peace and security, to development or to human rights and democracy, there are encouraging signs of progress in some areas along with worrying evidence of stagnation or even reversal in others. But one of the important conclusions we can all draw from the report is that the Millennium Development Goals, as ambitious as they are, can still be achieved at both national and global levels if there is sufficient political will. There is, therefore, a clear need for political leaders to sustain the current momentum in order to avoid setbacks and accelerate progress in the coming years.

The crucial importance of forging strategic partnerships at both national and international levels and of active participation by all stakeholders in implementing the Millennium Development Goals was strongly highlighted at the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held last month in the capital city of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar. One of the three thematic sessions of the conference, which was attended by the representatives of 119 Governments and a host of international organizations and civil society organizations, was held under the sub-theme of "Partnership and participation in poverty reduction and attainment of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals". The main conclusions and findings of the thematic session have been reflected in the final outcome documents; the Ulaanbaatar Declaration and Plan of Action on Democracy, Good Governance and Civil Society. The detailed report on the result of this conference and its follow-up will be delivered to the General Assembly by my Government early next month, when the Assembly considers the relevant agenda item.

National reports on the Millennium Development Goals, in our view, serve as an important tool in measuring progress made and ensuring that the Millennium Development Goals remain at the heart of development efforts. It is encouraging that around 40 countries have completed their national Millennium Development Goals reports and that an additional 60 reports are expected by the end of this year. I am pleased to inform the General Assembly that the Government of Mongolia is being actively engaged in finalizing its first Millennium Development Goals report.

In preparing its national Millennium Development Goals report, my Government has undertaken a series of preparatory activities over the past two years. In 2001, when we observed the fortieth anniversary of Mongolia's membership of the United Nations, a joint conference was organized under the theme of "Forty years of Mongolia-United Nations cooperation: Implementation of the Millennium Declaration," the main findings of which were subsequently included in my Government's memorandum submitted at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

In June 2002 we set up a national task force on the Millennium Development Goals composed of key ministries, the National Statistical Office, academia and civil society organizations, and entrusted with task of tailoring the Millennium Development Goals to the national context, improving the statistical database and the system of evaluation and monitoring of progress and drafting the report through a broad-based consultative process. The first draft of the report was extensively discussed at a national consultative meeting held last August among all the stakeholders, including our bilateral and multilateral partners, civil society and the private sector. The views expressed at the meeting and its conclusions have been incorporated into the report.

The report contains overall information on the current status and measures undertaken by the Government to implement the eight Development Goals and the 16 targets. It also outlines the major challenges, obstacles and priorities for future activities and development assistance under each Goal. The Government of Mongolia has made poverty reduction its key priority, committing itself to the Millennium Development Goal target of halving absolute poverty

by 2015. Further, it has pledged to meet the poverty reduction criteria specified in our Poverty Reduction Partnership Agreement with the Asian Development Bank. We have also finalized our Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper emphasizing a private-sector-led growth strategy and increased social spending in the context of macroeconomic stabilization.

The Government adopted a national programme on supporting household livelihood as a second phase of its poverty reduction programme. To effectively reduce poverty, my Government has identified core strategies including the following: ensuring sustained economic growth, addressing urban poverty and disparity, active engagement of local communities and civil society organizations in anti-poverty activities, natural disaster and risk management, and provision of adequate social protection.

My delegation believes that national reports on the Millennium Development Goals will be important in the review of the progress of implementation of the Millennium Development Goals scheduled for 2005. In that respect, we believe that it might be advisable to request Member States to periodically report to the Secretary-General on their national progress, so that a comprehensive picture can be available for review.

Last week and the week before, in the general debate, the heads of our delegations reaffirmed their faith in the United Nations and agreed on the urgent need to take decisive measures so that this world Organization is adequately equipped to effectively address the formidable challenges, both existing and evolving. My delegation fully shares the Secretary-General's view that "Member States need ... to take a hard look at the existing 'architecture' of international institutions" (*A/58/323, para. 91*) and "consider reaching swift agreement on [reform] as a national interest of the highest order" (*para. 98*).

The reform measures in our review ought to include the revitalization of the General Assembly and a rationalization of its agenda, the enlargement and democratization of the Security Council, the reinvigoration of the Economic and Social Council, a review of the interrelationship of the United Nations with the Bretton Woods institutions and a review of the role of the Trusteeship Council in the light of the new responsibilities entrusted upon the world Organization over the recent past.

Mongolia supports the idea of setting the year 2005, when the international community is to review the progress achieved in implementing all the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration, as a target date for reaching agreement on the reform measures. In that regard, my delegation looks forward to receiving the results and recommendations to be developed by the high-level panel of eminent personalities and to actively working with our fellow nations during both the current and upcoming sessions of the General Assembly towards revitalizing the United Nations.

In conclusion, I assure the President of my delegation's full support and cooperation in discharging his onerous task.

Mr. Mubarez (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): The reports of the Secretary-General before the Assembly provide us with many facts on the work of the Organization during the past year, and on follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit. The two reports provide the facts within a context that allows for an assessment of the achievements and a clear vision of the future. We can only commend both reports. We agree with the introduction of the report on the work of the Organization (A/58/1) that this has been a trying year for the United Nations. The war in Iraq has seriously tested the principle of collective security, on which the Organization is based. The Secretary-General expressed that very clearly, along with the general observation that multilateral international action has been undermined by unilateral action on the part of some, which runs counter to the requirements of joint action and collective security.

If the statements to which we have listened thus far accurately reflect international public opinion and international will, the overwhelming majority of United Nations Member States reaffirm the importance of collective work in facing common challenges and of harmonizing national interests, which are daily becoming more complex and intertwined. My country has always been firmly convinced that the best way to meet collective security challenges and the demands of globalization is through multilateral efforts on the part of regional and international organizations, particularly the United Nations.

We have noted with satisfaction the Organization's efforts in the past year in the political, economic and humanitarian areas to implement the

relevant resolutions. However, a lack of consensus has caused peace and security efforts to falter, as the report noted, which in turn has negatively affected international relations — beginning with the tragic events of 11 September 2001 and ending with the occupation of Iraq — in addition to differences of visions, conflicts of interest and hesitation to shoulder the responsibility and demands for collective security and to meet the requirements of peace. All of that has affected the nature of international relations and the credibility and role of the United Nations in particular.

However, the undermining of the Organization, its role and its credibility has not been caused by those events alone. Israel has challenged and damaged international unity and the Organization and international legitimacy for more than four decades with its continued occupation of Arab territories and its coercive actions against their inhabitants, in addition to its continued refusal to subject its nuclear facilities to international monitoring and its repeated aggression against its neighbours, the latest of which was its aggression against Syria. If the terrorist acts suffered by the United States in September 2001 raised awareness of the danger that terrorism poses to collective security, the fight against that scourge has been faltering, with major differences on basic principles. Moreover, the fight against terrorism has addressed only terrorism's manifestations, not its root causes, and it has failed to distinguish between terrorism and the legitimate right of peoples to resist foreign occupation. The Secretary-General warned about that in his report on the work of the Organization when he stated,

> "there is no trade-off between human rights and security: respecting human rights must be a fundamental element in the fight against terrorism. Promoting values of tolerance and the dialogue among civilizations is also of paramount importance." (*A/58/1, para. 63*)

Much important progress has been achieved in the area of respect for human rights, as the report states. However, practical implementation has encountered many difficulties because of the primacy of narrow interests and political considerations over commitments and moral and humanitarian principles. In that regard, we note that in his report on implementation of the Millennium Declaration the Secretary-General stated that "in the area of human rights and democracy there is a danger that we may retreat from some of the important gains made in the previous decade" (*A/58/323, para. 3*). The report also pointed out that the obviously slow pace in implementing the Millennium Development Goals can be attributed to a lack of the clear vision and political will needed to truly improve the lives of people in developing countries. The United Nations remains the principal forum for international action and all countries are aware that there is a need for basic reform in the Organization so it can meet future challenges and adapt to the ever-accelerating changes in international relations.

In that connection, we support the concepts and proposals made since the Millennium Declaration to introduce basic reforms into the Organization. In particular, we welcome the Secretary-General's initiative of establishing a panel of eminent personalities to set out a specific plan for reform aimed at ensuring broad participation representing a wide spectrum of opinion. For our part, we reaffirm our readiness to cooperate with the President of the General Assembly in ensuring that the work of this session provides a real impetus for our common endeavour.

Mr. Lamba (Malawi): This timely and important debate on the follow-up to the Millennium Summit and on the work of the Organization provides an opportunity to assess fulfilment of the declared commitments of Member States. The Millennium Summit, whose outcomes were the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, represented a unique occasion and effort that underlined for us the challenges and goals of creating a world characterized by development, peace and security. To that end, Malawi welcomes the reports of the Secretary-General now before the Assembly.

The Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization in document A/58/1 presents a lucid picture of tasks facing the United Nations and of progress achieved. In this debate, as the report suggested, we must focus our attention on strengthening the Organization by taking a measured assessment of what has happened, reflecting on the sort of Organization we want in the future and beginning to make the necessary changes.

The Millennium Declaration clearly spelled out a development agenda that must be pursued by the United Nations in the fight against poverty and other problems facing the world today. The attainment of the Millennium Development Goals will depend largely on

how much progress we achieve in implementing the outcomes of major United Nations conferences such as the International Conference on Financing for Development, held at Monterrey; the World Summit on Sustainable Development, at Johannesburg; the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, at Brussels; and the World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen. The collapse of the recent World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference at Cancún is a sad commentary on the extent of the North-South partnership.

As indicated in the Millennium Declaration, Africa — the continent most affected by poverty, hunger, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and violent conflicts — requires special attention. Poverty will find its solution in full implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). While the United Nations endorsed NEPAD as the vehicle for promoting Africa's development, that positive step must be matched with a flow of the requisite resources for its implementation. In fact, tangible support for the accomplishment of Africa's development agenda under NEPAD should include trade liberalization and the cancelling of external debt, in addition to achievement of the official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product, in order to eradicate extreme poverty on our continent.

There is no denying that peace and security are prerequisites for any meaningful development. As we deal with the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction and the question of terrorism, let us not lose sight of the devastating impact of small arms and light weapons on global peace and security. The United Nations, working in partnership with Member States, should deal decisively with the question of small arms and light weapons.

Malawi remains committed to the fight against terrorism, as demonstrated by the Government's recent ratification of and accession to four United Nations conventions pertaining to the fight against terrorism. However, while the Government has demonstrated a strong commitment to the fight against terrorism, the effectiveness of actions in that regard hinges on the availability of capacity and resources for the implementation of the conventions. In this regard, we look forward to the support and cooperation of the international community in the fight against terrorism, in particular with regard to the development of capacities and provision of resources for combating the scourge.

Achieving peace and security should be the preponderant concern in any effort geared towards human development in an environment of democracy and human rights. The world continues to witness terrorism, both national and international, as well as civil armed conflicts, all of which have rendered productive life impossible, as people suffer displacement, destitution and deprivation. Global peace and development will always be beyond reach unless Member States show synergy in taking appropriate multilateral measures while respecting justice. Wars are creating food crises and poverty, particularly in Africa, which are threatening peace and security. Malawi welcomes the Secretary-General's strategy of varying the United Nations approach to peace and security so as to include preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building.

The issue of Iraq — both before and after the March 2003 war — has challenged the United Nations immeasurably, making clear the flaws of war as a solution to problems. Just before the war, Malawi affirmed, on behalf of the African Group, the need for resilience and restraint to avert armed conflict, which seemed imminent. At that point, multilateralism had effectively been suspended. The United Nations was turned into a concerned observer. Today, although the field combat in Iraq was declared to be over on 1 May 2003, peace continues to elude every person in Iraq. The recent tragic attack against the United Nations in Baghhad and the death of United Nations staff members, the daily guerrilla activity and the deaths of allied military personnel remind us that, without the leadership of the United Nations, total peace in Iraq will not be an easy to achieve.

In the area of conflict resolution, Malawi pays tribute to the role of the United Nations in the various conflict zones. In Africa, the Organization's visibility in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Horn of Africa has enhanced peace. The same can be said of other parts of the world, as the United Nations works to achieve synergy with regional organizations. However, peacekeeping and peace-building, which characterize the post-conflict period, constitute a delicate phase, requiring the practical goodwill of the whole international community. Malawi's contribution to peacekeeping operations in Africa and elsewhere underlines its solid support for peace and security.

Malawi believes that the new challenges to peace and security, including international terrorism, can be fully addressed only through international partnerships. To that end, Malawi encourages the United Nations to address regional conflicts through its collaboration with the European Union, NATO, the Economic Community of West African States, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, the Southern African Development Community, the Association of South-East Asian Nations and the Organization of American States.

The United Nations today is the supreme custodian of the international peace agenda. The major task of the General Assembly, therefore, remains the identification of potent ways to strengthen, rather than weaken, it. The United Nations and its Security Council have recently suffered from a loss of credibility and effectiveness in the face of certain conflicts, including that in Iraq. However, it is gratifying to note that the lost credibility has returned to the United Nations and some faith in it has been restored.

No single nation today can claim to have the capacity to resolve, single-handedly, an armed conflict of the magnitude of that in the Middle East. The United Nations role with regard to the Palestinian problem, therefore, must continue to be visible, with international support being provided through the Quartet.

In the area of humanitarian commitment, the commendable performance of the United Nations, working through its agencies, has registered conspicuous successes with regard to situations of natural disaster, diseases such as HIV/AIDS, war and forced displacement. Sub-Saharan Africa is today home to 29.4 million people infected with HIV/AIDS. These problems together form a cycle of hopelessness made worse by poverty.

While acknowledging the invaluable and crucial role of the United Nations in the coordination of assistance and the protection of civilians in armed conflict, Malawi requests the timely delivery of such assistance.

Given the magnitude of the poverty suffered by most countries — exacerbated by the destabilizing effects of threats to peace and security — development in those countries could well remain an illusion. According to the Secretary-General's report, critical elements to promote development include enhanced and increased financing for development; private sector cooperation; the success of trade negotiations; the alleviation of urban and rural poverty; secure access to food, good health and education; improved governance; opportunities for impoverished women; and the acquisition of communication technologies. Malawi suffers from extreme poverty, which hampers the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. The United Nations must continue to work creatively to reduce, with international support, the gap between the rich and the poor.

In conclusion, Malawi commends the Secretary-General for his two comprehensive reports and for the strategies that he has outlined. Malawi reiterates that the United Nations is the supreme multilateral Organization competent to address global issues through collective approaches and shared responsibility.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): It is with great pleasure that the Icelandic delegation congratulates Mr. Hunte on his election as President of the General Assembly.

We thank the Secretary-General for his reports on implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/58/323) and on the work of the Organization (A/58/1), which reflect the challenges that the United Nations faces in a turbulent and unpredictable world and which together cover the entire agenda of the Organization. In his introduction to his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General correctly points out that the United Nations is not an end in itself but rather an instrument for achieving common ends.

In the general debate at the beginning of this fifty-eighth session, we heard a resounding message: now is the time to reform the United Nations system and to ensure that it will serve contemporary and future generations in an effective and relevant manner.

Iceland welcomes and supports the initiative of the Secretary-General to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities to make the necessary recommendations for the future of our common Organization. Now we need men and women of wisdom and experience, of vision and courage to secure the future of the United Nations. They will need to address a number of issues, including, first, the role and status of the General Assembly as the chief policy-making body of the United Nations and, secondly, the need for a more open, more representative Security Council, reflecting the views of the States Members of the United Nations nearly 60 years after its foundation.

Thirdly, by adopting the best in information technology, the United Nations will not only be a more effective and open organization; it can also help in bridging the information divide in the world.

We may not realize in our daily work at the United Nations that this is an organization in constant flux. Some changes are minor adjustments; others, such as the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, are milestones. The United Nations must continue adjusting to an ever-changing world.

The objectives ahead are clear. What is now on the agenda is implementation. We align ourselves with the statement of the European Union on the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, in particular its statement that the values we seek are best guaranteed through effective multilateralism.

Let us not wait, but let us heed the Secretary-General's call for these urgent and timely changes and reforms. In that connection, I would like to refer to the words of Mr. Halldor Ásgrímsson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland; in his recent address to the Assembly, he said that we must craft for ourselves a United Nations that is task-oriented, representative, focused and coordinated. Iceland believes that the opportunity is here, and that the moment is now.

Mr. Schori (Sweden): Let me begin by emphasizing that Sweden fully aligns itself with the statement made by Italy on behalf of the European Union. I can therefore be brief.

There is a window of opportunity for reform during this session of the General Assembly. The call for further reform of the United Nations was again brought to the Assembly by the Secretary-General through his report on implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/58/323) and his statement at the opening of this session of the General Assembly. A vast majority of the speakers during the general debate also agreed on the necessity of making reform happen.

Sweden would like to underline its support for the Secretary-General's initiative to establish a panel of eminent personalities. Its establishment challenges us to work with even more determination to achieve tangible results in the areas that the Secretary-General has rightly pointed to as fundamental to the work of the Organization. We look forward to an active dialogue with the panel.

But we cannot just await the results of the panel's work. Reform must be brought forward now — indeed, during this session. The Assembly can be revitalized. It is a matter of political will. There is no lack of constructive ideas. Sweden encourages the President of the General Assembly to further this part of the reform agenda and to put concrete suggestions before the Assembly. He can count on our support in this.

If we wish the General Assembly to be a vigorous actor in the international political arena, we should take time to reflect on its modus operandi. We in the Assembly must ask ourselves whether the draft resolutions that we traditionally introduce — sometimes with very few changes from year to year — serve their intended purpose and reflect the current situation. Is the best way to influence the situation to routinely request another report from the Secretary-General? In some cases we could — and should — consider biennializing or triennializing resolutions, discontinuing some of our initiatives, or changing their focus. That way, we would also ease the burden of the Secretariat so that it could better focus on current and more urgent requests from the Assembly.

Reform of the Security Council — that is, its enlargement — is essential, even inevitable, if we want the Council to stay relevant. Rather than trying to find the optimal solution now for decades to come, we should accept that any reform may have to be re-thought, in five or 10 years' time. Such reform would clearly signal that the United Nations is prepared to adapt and adjust in order to safeguard its authority in world politics. We will return to this item in greater depth during next week's discussions in the Assembly.

The Millennium Development Goals represent a unique opportunity for the world's countries to work together for equitable and sustainable global and national development. The eighth Millennium Development Goal is unique, as it represents a true partnership between developing and developed countries. Indeed, together with the Monterrey Consensus, it implies a contract of mutual obligations. The policies and actions relating to the eighth Millennium Development Goal — and thus primarily to us in the developed countries — should be made more precise. We support the call of the Secretary-General for a firm timetable with built-in deadlines.

Rich countries such as Sweden should be obligated to report on their progress towards achieving

the Millennium Development Goals, especially concerning the agenda of the eighth Goal. It is a matter of responsibility, credibility and donor accountability. An international framework for reporting on the eighth Millennium Development Goal must be designed and implemented.

The Government of Sweden has presented to its Parliament a bill on a policy for global development; policy coherence and donor accountability are at its heart. What used to be primarily the task of development cooperation is now a task for the entire Government. This is a pioneering change. The bill will provide Sweden with a solid platform to take an even stronger and more active part in contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We will not miss that opportunity.

Mr. Sagach (Ukraine): I have the honour to speak on behalf of GUUAM States: the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

At the historic Millennium Summit and at the Security Council Summit the leaders of United Nations Member States adopted two milestone declarations, enriched by the half-century experience of an Organization that embodied our common hopes and expectations for living in the twenty-first century, in a more secure and just world.

However, subsequent developments in the world brought new and daunting challenges before the international community. Three years after the millennium events, we find ourselves at the point where the very credibility of the United Nations and its ability to deal with old and new challenges are questioned.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the preparation of his comprehensive and thought-provoking report on implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/58/323), in which he raises many issues of great importance for the future of both this Organization and the world as a whole. It is our common responsibility to find answers to those questions if we truly want to see the goals of the Millennium Declaration achieved.

Yet earlier this year, the United Nations was divided on the way to resolve the Iraqi crisis. We firmly believe that the instruments of the United Nations are very important for the normalization of the situation in that country. Whatever the arguments were, we must now come together for a common purpose: to restore sovereignty to the Iraqi people as quickly as practically possible, to restore the law and order and to conduct large-scale reconstruction of the country. We have a shared interest in helping Iraqi citizens embrace the freedoms that they have been denied for so long and for which the United Nations was founded. Guided by a sense of responsibility for the destiny of the Iraqi nation for peace and security in the region, the GUUAM Member States dispatched their military contingents to the Persian Gulf. We hope that the Security Council will agree soon on a new resolution to strengthen the United Nations role in Iraq, including by providing the necessary arrangements in the area of security.

GUUAM strongly supports the need to strengthen the United Nations, as the major forum for international cooperation and for achieving collective decisions on issues of common concern and on its ability to deal with them. GUUAM welcomes the intention of the Secretary-General to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities to examine current challenges to peace and security and to provide, before the next session of the General Assembly, recommendations on ways to strengthen United Nations response to those challenges.

We have witnessed significant changes achieved in the implementation of the recommendations of a similar panel, chaired by Ambassador Brahimi, on peacekeeping reform. In this area, the United Nations has the capacity today to act, and it already acts more flexibly, rapidly and effectively. We hope that the recent discussions and actions in the area of conflict prevention will bring us closer to establishing an international system capable of the timely and efficient prevention of armed conflicts. This dimension should be pivotal in the philosophy of future United Nations activities.

GUUAM firmly condemns terrorism in all its manifestations. Our countries joined the anti-terrorist coalition from the very beginning and have made a significant contribution to its activities. As the threat of terrorism to international peace and security requires sustained, long-term and global action, this Organization continues to play the central role in facilitating intergovernmental cooperation in the fight against it, as well as in strengthening the capacity of each nation's legislation and executive machinery to combat terrorism.

Today we may say that the GUUAM States are taking part in the implementation of all 12 universal anti-terrorist conventions through, inter alia, appropriate bilateral and multilateral mechanisms. The summary report on GUUAM counter-terrorism activities was presented during the special meeting of the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee with international, regional and subregional organizations, held last March.

Another issue to which I would like to draw the attention of Members relates to the problem of so-called frozen conflicts, which were left as unhealed scars in the new independent States that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The international community cannot turn a blind eye to the lack of progress in the settlement of conflicts in Abkhazia, Georgia; Nagorny-Karabakh, Republic of Azerbaijan; and Transdnistria, Republic of Moldova, which for a decade have been destabilizing the situation in our region. Postponing the final settlement of those crises might have irreversible consequences. We call on the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other international organizations involved to accelerate their respective efforts to resolve those conflicts.

Slight progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals has been made so far. More vigorous and coordinated efforts, both on the part of the donor community and the recipient countries, are needed. We believe that national ownership and leadership are critical for the successful implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

In the meantime, we need to strengthen our capacities to prepare the Millennium Development Goals reports, consolidate information for a poverty-related index and provide analysis for policy-makers. Therefore, the GUUAM States stress the need to operationalize the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) poverty reduction trust fund to this end.

As countries with economies in transition, the GUUAM States would greatly welcome the further strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations system, under the overall coordination of the Development Group, in the following areas: enhancing the role of United Nations Resident Coordinators and streamlining the UNDP-World Bank partnership formula at all levels; coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the decisions taken at the United Nations summits in Monterrey and Johannesburg; further promoting the Millennium Project, designed to draw intellectual power to bring new ideas on how to speed up attainment of the Millennium Development Goals; supplementing the efforts of national leadership through nurturing multistakeholder dialogue based on active participation of the private sector, civil society and non-governmental organizations; and further maintaining the Millennium campaign.

In a globalized world, a favourable external environment is no less important to sustainable development than is internal economic growth. Trade is crucial to fostering growth and reducing poverty. While two of the GUUAM States — Georgia and the Republic of Moldova — are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO), others — Ukraine, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Uzbekistan — are still in the process of accession. We urge the international community to facilitate accession of those States to the WTO by providing special and differential treatment terms that will contribute to intraregional trade and will support national capacity-building. Taking into account the UNDP mandate in the field of trade, we emphasize the importance of its involvement in the process of strengthening trade negotiation capacities of acceding States.

The regional dimension cannot be overestimated in our development efforts. The Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Environment for Europe, held in Kiev this year, was a concrete follow-up to last year's World Summit on Sustainable Development. It proved successful in further consolidating the pan-European environmental process and in promoting the implementation of the outcome of the Johannesburg Summit in the region of Eastern and Central Europe.

The so-called soft security threats of HIV/AIDS and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), the illegal traffic in narcotic drugs, as well as other threats, demonstrate once again that, regardless of the differences countries may have, international cooperation is crucial to combating those challenges.

Everyone is aware of the devastating impact of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in a great number of countries, particularly in Africa. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which was set up on the initiative of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, has become an

effective tool for implementing the integrated action plan in this area. We commend the convening of the high-level meetings of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, on 22 September, and we hope that it will give further impetus to our joint efforts to overcome this scourge.

This year marks the fifty-fifth anniversary of the unique document in the area of the promotion and the protection of human rights — the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Only 15 years before its historic adoption by the General Assembly, Ukrainians became the victims of man-made famine, which was engineered as part of a totalitarian policy against the Ukrainian people and which resulted in the death of at least 7 million innocent men, women and children. We call upon all Members of the Assembly to support Ukraine's initiative for the United Nations to pay a tribute to the memory of those who perished. It is crucial that such chapters of world history be known and remembered. Knowledge gives us the power to foresee future tragedies and to prevent them before it is too late.

With its universal mandate and huge potential, the United Nations has a leading role in pursuing the Millennium Declaration Goals. GUUAM stands ready to cooperate in their implementation with other Member States and the United Nations. We therefore would greatly appreciate the support of all delegations to the request that GUUAM obtain observer status in the General Assembly.

Mr. Baduri (Eritrea): Allow me to seize this opportunity to express appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the comprehensive reports on the work of the Organization (A/58/1) and on the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Declaration (A/58/323). The reports are notable not only for their clarity, precision and objective assessment, but also for underscoring the myriad challenges that confront the international community and the opportunities that could have been exploited by it.

The two reports make it amply clear that there is a dialectical relationship between peace and development. Eritrea's bitter experience during the past four decades is only a tragic confirmation of this self-evident truth. Conflicts and war spawn instability. Instability causes socio-economic dislocation, stagnation and deterioration frustrates development efforts. Economic and social breakdown breeds extreme poverty that begets human insecurity. Lack of human security, broadly defined, is the primary root cause of conflict and war.

This has been the message that had informed the Millennium Declaration and subsequently the various summits during the past few years, including, in particular, the Monterrey, Doha and Johannesburg summits. It is also the reason that makes the achievement of the Development Goals of the Millennium Declaration central to any of our deliberations on either peace and security or development.

The achievement of these Goals demands collective action for mutual benefit. Humanity must therefore celebrate its unity by collectively confronting the problems and challenges of the new millennium that, it is now accepted, do not recognize international boundaries. It also acknowledges the imperative need for the United Nations, which has an indispensable role to play in the promotion of both peace and development, to be sufficiently empowered to ensure success. It is in this context that the Eritrean delegation shares the concern of the Secretary-General that, during the past two years, achievements have seriously lagged behind the timetable set by the Millennium Declaration to meet these Goals. It is also in this context that it wishes to address some of the issues raised in the two reports.

Recent events confirm that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continues to pose a grave threat to world peace and security. The destruction of these weapons and their delivery systems remains essential to the protection and the promotion of international peace and security. Yet, humanity is also suffering from the massive use of sophisticated conventional weapons, which have been used, even by the poorest of countries, in attempts to suppress a multiplicity of armed rebellions in their countries, as well as to equip groups to commit hegemonic aggression against their neighbours. Africa, and particularly the Horn of Africa, has been one such zone of instability. These States, which have abandoned their constitutional and international responsibilities to their peoples, region and the international community, continue to trigger ruinous arms races that wreak havoc on themselves and their neighbours.

Terrorism, transnational crime and drug trafficking have also contributed to the erosion of human security. Terrorism, in particular, is now a major

threat to peace and security and must be eradicated as soon as possible, with the active participation of all humanity. It is gratifying to note that the international community has shown solidarity and assumed collective responsibility in the fight against the scourge. Yet, it would be counter-productive and meaningless to fight terrorism without addressing the root causes of terrorism.

It is with satisfaction that the Eritrean delegation notes the Secretary-General's intent to shift focus from conflict response to conflict prevention. This will constitute a major step forward in the search for peace and development. Unfortunately, the proposal for the creation of a culture of conflict prevention does not, at present, seem to be attracting much support, although it is eminently clear that prevention is more effective and much less costly than peacekeeping or peace-building.

This, however, does not mean that peacekeeping should not be viewed as a major concern of our Organization. The Eritrean delegation considers peacekeeping operations as a critical component of the overall mission of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security. The Eritrean delegation has also taken note and, with a few exceptions, is supportive of the activities of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the areas of planning, management and support of peacekeeping operations.

The Secretary-General has repeatedly emphasized that any attempt to implement the Millennium Development Goals must, as a matter of priority, address the disparities between the various regions of the world. The Eritrean delegation notes with satisfaction that Africa is being given the attention it deserves. Of all the regions, Africa has been ravaged the most by poverty, conflict and pandemics. Unfortunately, it shares the concerns already expressed in this debate that there has hardly been any progress made in Africa to assure achievement of the Development Goals and that conditions in some countries have, in fact, deteriorated.

Nevertheless, it is our earnest hope that the decisions and resolutions of the various summits and other meetings on economic development and international cooperation will be effectively implemented to ensure the elimination of the obstacles that have hitherto hindered economic growth and sustainable development. The problem of poverty eradication, which has dominated the agenda of most of these meetings, must in particular be given urgent attention without minimizing the importance of foreign direct investment, sustainable financing of external debt, official development assistance and fair international trade.

The 2001 report of the World Health Organization clearly indicates that the current public health situation in third world countries is detrimental to their development. Consequently, investment in the health sector is critical, not only to improve health conditions, but also to ensure human security, as envisaged in the Millennium Development Goals. A coordinated and holistic approach and international assistance are needed to meaningfully tackle the most threatening infectious diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. The 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS is a good example of the type of approach and cooperation needed in any such effort, although no major progress has been achieved since that meeting.

Eritrea recognizes — if only because we have been fighting for our human rights for 30 years — that respecting human rights is an expression of the noblest attributes of human nature. Human rights constitute the bedrock requirement for the realization of the Charter's vision. We acknowledge the success of the United Nations in bringing human rights to the forefront of its agenda and to prominence in international relations. However, the United Nations has ignored Eritreans' pleas for the respect of their basic human right — their right to self-determination — and ignored the trampling of their other human rights by successive colonial Ethiopian Governments. We are gratified that human rights have assumed a rightfully central function in international relations, even as it is obvious that this concept is abused and plagued by selective enforcement, double standards, politicization and holier-than-thou attitudes.

Many regions of the world are affected today by humanitarian crises caused by conflict and natural disasters. Most of the countries affected belong to the third world, in particular, Africa. While it is true that progress has been made in the delivery of humanitarian assistance to these countries, it is also true that much more needs to be done. It is therefore incumbent on the Members of the United Nations to empower the Organization and to actively cooperate with it, with a view to enabling it to act speedily and effectively in situations of emergency, whether due to conflict,

drought, famine, displacement, natural disasters or infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Also, it would be the height of moral and political insensitivity to deliberately ignore the fact that all victims are equal.

I wish to conclude by reiterating Eritrea's avid interest in the reform and strengthening of the United Nations. The Eritrean delegation therefore welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the matter and shall contribute its views during the debate of the appropriate agenda item.

Mr. Aguilar Zinser (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation supports the statement made yesterday by the permanent representative of Peru, on behalf of the Rio Group, and therefore would simply like to add a few comments on this topic.

First, I would like to say that, as in the previous two years, my delegation shares the concerns of the Secretary-General regarding the uneven implementation of the Millennium Declaration. There still remain many disparities in this area, and results in achieving the Millennium Development Goals have been mixed. In his recent report, the Secretary-General indicated that, "In the area of peace and security, in particular, the consensus expressed or implied in the Declaration now looks less solid than it did three years ago" (*A/58/323, para. 3*). At the same time, he points out that, "In the area of development, by contrast, a stronger consensus has been forged, but grave doubts remain as to whether Member States are sufficiently determined to act on it" (*ibid.*).

As has also been said, there is a risk of stagnation or even reversal of progress in the areas of human rights and democracy. This picture has been further complicated by the events in recent months. Still, there are encouraging signs, such as the fact that, last year, progress was made towards universal ratification of the six main instruments governing human rights. As a promoter of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and their Families, Mexico welcomes the entry into force of this instrument and hopes that more countries will adhere to it. We also view with satisfaction the fact that the Assembly has unanimously adopted a resolution that reiterates the importance of the fact that, in the fight against terrorism, human rights must be fully respected.

Nationally, I am pleased to reiterate the fact that Mexico has made headway in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As was indicated by the President of Mexico, Vicente Fox, from this rostrum, we have adopted these Goals as our own and have worked in all areas of development to achieve them, both within the proper timeframes and in the proper way. We particularly emphasize the important — though, as yet, insufficient — progress that has been made in poverty reduction.

At the same time, we have continued to be committed to promoting and respecting human rights, and are moving forward to consolidate our democracy and eradicate the plague of corruption.

Mexico welcomes the fact that this rostrum has been used by the delegations participating in this debate to reiterate their commitment to the reform of our Organization. We have listened here to many proposals, which deserve our consideration and on which we must come to decisions. We agree with the view of the Secretary-General when he says that the United Nations requires truly radical reform, with a view to responding to the many challenges and threats that face the international community. We also agree that the great strength of our Organization resides in its legitimacy, which is founded upon the principles enshrined in the San Francisco Charter. Therefore, reform must lead to a revitalization of Member States' commitment to our Organization, with a view to giv8ing its decisions more effectiveness and legitimacy and to ensuring that they are respected. There is no alternative to the United Nations and our commitment to its reform must therefore be unswerving, sustained and unambiguous.

The President took the Chair.

Mexico supports the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a panel of eminent personalities to study and make recommendations on the main organs of the United Nations, their performance and reform. We believe that it is essential at the same time to give the highest level of political support to such reform and actively to work in all areas, here and now in this General Assembly, using this session to make meaningful progress that will make our work more efficient and legitimate.

As regards revitalizing the General Assembly, we believe that, while one of our organ's great merits is its universal and broadly democratic nature, it is essential that it also acquire true executive capabilities. To that end, it is necessary to develop new machinery. The General Assembly should also update its working procedures. The Assembly cannot continue to consider

all of the items on its agenda at each session. It must be able to focus on a smaller number of items at each opportunity — items that reflect the main priorities and concerns of the international community — so as to delve deeper into its consideration of them and to establish guidelines to orient our work in the Organization as a whole.

With respect to the Economic and Social Council, while progress has been made in its restructuring, it is essential that we strengthen its role as coordinating organ of the activities of the specialized agencies, including the Bretton Woods institutions — a function that has been allocated to it by the Charter. The influence of the United Nations in economic and financial issues will depend largely on an understanding of the role which the Economic and Social Council must play, actively and to the full.

As to the Secretariat, we believe that, while significant administrative reform has been made, it is necessary to eliminate inertia and improper practices that commonly identify posts with certain countries or permit excessively autonomous centres of power to flourish.

As the Secretary-General clearly says in his report, the decisions of the Security Council increasingly lack legitimacy in the eyes of the developing countries, which, I reiterate, represent the majority of Members of our Organization. We are therefore convinced that the way to ensure the greater legitimacy of and, accordingly, greater support for the Council's decisions and actions is through reform leading to greater transparency in its working methods, greater representativity and the increasingly limited resort to the veto. Like other delegations, we believe that the way to achieve this goal is not by expanding privileges within the Council, such as permanent membership, or by perpetuating the right of veto in its current form. Mexico considers such privileges to be out of date.

It has again become clear through our discussion that, while there is some agreement on the need to reform the United Nations, there is nonetheless evident reluctance to abandon traditional national positions. The current circumstances require all Member States to find common ground, forsake unrealistic claims and act together in the interest of the entire international community.

Mr. Zenna (Ethiopia): My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the work of the Organization and the follow-up to the United Nations Millennium Declaration. We commend his continuously innovative approach to reforming and strengthening our Organization.

Ethiopia welcomes the proposed establishment of a high-level panel of eminent personalities, as announced by the Secretary-General in his opening speech on 23 September 2003. We agree with him that change is needed in the United Nations to tackle the growing challenges that confront all humanity. Change is needed to enable the United Nations to play a still more central role in fighting poverty and enhancing the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. We need to strengthen the United Nations in order to make it a more potent force in fighting terrorism and maintaining world peace and stability. Ethiopia will work with other Member countries to make the United Nations more efficient and effective.

We note with grave concern the fact that much of the world is falling short in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Worse still, progress in the attainment of the Goals — such as halving global poverty, substantially reducing child mortality and the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS — have been uneven, with marked differences among and within regions.

The recent Human Development Report, under the theme "Millennium Development Goals", states that some 54 countries are poorer now than they were in 1990 and that in 21 countries a larger proportion of people are suffering from hunger. In 14 countries, more children are dying before the age of five and in 12 countries primary school enrolment is shrinking. Furthermore, human development indices declined in 21 countries. All the aforementioned figures indicate that we are not on the right track towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Since the Millennium Summit, we have undertaken a number of new commitments. The world has never been short of commitments and pledges. However, the fundamental challenge involves translating words into deeds and keeping the commitments already made. Estimates indicate that at least a doubling of official development assistance from its current level of $50 billion is needed to fulfil

the Millennium Development Goals, which were globally pledged.

Similarly, while encouraging achievements have resulted from addressing the debt crisis of some poor countries through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative and other mechanisms, the call for a swifter and deeper debt-relief mechanism remains unheeded. Consequently, many African countries continue to suffer as a result of a debilitating debt burden.

The objective of meeting the special needs of Africa must remain at the top of the agenda in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Estimates indicate that, in order to achieve the goal of halving the number of people living in absolute poverty in Africa, the economies of that country must grow by at least 7 per cent annually. But statistics tell us that many countries in Africa are well below that target.

The 2003 *Economic Report on Africa*, issued by the Economic Commission for Africa, indicates that Africa's growth in gross domestic product declined from an average of 4.3 per cent in 2001 to 3.2 per cent in 2002. According to the report, in 2002, of the 53 African countries, only five achieved the 7 per cent growth rate required to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Hence, if the Goals are to be met, it is essential that the commitments made should be carried out — and carried out immediately.

We in Ethiopia believe that the achievement of the Millennium Development goals relating to poverty eradication will depend to a great extent on progress in rural and agricultural development. This is mainly because about 85 per cent of our population, and an even larger percentage of the poor, live in rural areas. The other reason is that efforts to reduce the deepening urban poverty can hardly bear fruit in the absence of rapid progress in agricultural and rural development activities.

It is with this in mind that the Government has decided to embark on a substantial and sustained investment in research and extension, in farmer education and training, in water harvesting and in building the physical and institutional infrastructures of rural markets.

We have also begun to focus more on strengthening the governance system with a view to ensuring peace and stability, enhancing the participation of the rural people in the design and implementation of rural development programmes, and actively engaging the State in the rural areas.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar): At the outset, allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his two reports — the report on the work of the Organization and the report on the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. Taken together with his statement to the General Assembly on 23 September, they cover a wide spectrum of the Organization's activities and events over the preceding 12 months, including peace and security issues, terrorism, human rights, democracy, HIV/AIDS, narcotic drugs and sustainable development.

In the area of peace and security, we share the Secretary-General's assessment that the year under review was indeed a challenging time for our Organization and that the war in Iraq greatly tested the principle of collective security and the resilience of the Organization. We fully agree with the view expressed by the Secretary-General and share his concern that the use of force pre-emptively could set precedents that result in proliferation of the unilateral and lawless use of force, with or without justification.

We cannot aspire to overcome the complex problems that beset our world without a reaffirmation of the universal commitment to the principles of multilateralism and international law. Indeed, Myanmar is steadfast in its belief that the United Nations has an indispensable role to play in ensuring international peace and security.

Terrorism poses a grave threat to the international community. A little over a month ago, terrorists brought destruction to the very doorstep of our Organization when they took the lives of 22 United Nations personnel in a bomb attack on United Nations headquarters in Iraq. The international community must meet the challenge without giving any quarter to terrorists, anywhere. At the same time, we must address the political, social and economic inequalities that cause alienation and despair in order adequately to address this challenge.

The Secretary-General has stressed the necessity of strengthening the weapons of mass destruction regime. The continued proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a threat to international peace and security. In our view, the issue can be resolved only through multilateral disarmament measures. Bypassing the will of the majority of the international community

under the pretext of combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction cannot in any way contribute to international peace and security, as recent events have clearly shown.

The menace of narcotic drugs is adequately reflected in the Secretary-General's report and deserves our undivided attention. The drug menace is closely linked to crime and terrorism. Success in the war against drugs will contribute to a successful outcome in the fight against terror and crime. In Myanmar, the suppression of narcotic drugs is accorded the highest priority. We have initiated a 15-year plan that would totally eradicate narcotic drugs from the country by 2014. The plan is formulated based on the balanced approach of the United Nations, which aims to reduce supply, demand and abuse, with the active participation of the local community.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has recognized Myanmar's commitment to the anti-drug campaign. Commencing in January 2004, Myanmar will serve on the United Nations Commission on Narcotics Drugs and hopes to work with other members in combating this scourge to humankind.

Today the world is faced with another challenge which poses no less a threat than terrorism or drugs. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has brought misery and suffering to countless numbers of people. The special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS brought together Governments, civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in the quest to find an effective and timely response to the challenges posed by the pandemic. The new level of commitment by the international community encourages us and must be translated into action.

Speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco pointed out, among other things, that

> "Sustainable development also requires that food security be guaranteed [in addition to a good economic situation], as well as adequate health and education services." *(see A/58/PV.23)*

We wholeheartedly support the statement by the Chairman of the Group of 77.

In Myanmar, we have given special priority to the development of the border areas where the national peoples reside. The programme now encompasses all parts of the country and seeks to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas. Development activities that have a direct impact on improving living standards of the populace have been activated. These include construction of roads, bridges, schools and hospitals. Modern agricultural methods have been introduced by means of a programme that now covers 83,000 square miles, where 5.3 million of our citizens live. The Government has spent nearly 46 billion kyats — more than $500 million — to create an enabling environment for sustainable development.

Together with Member States, Myanmar pledges to promote and observe human rights, democracy and good governance, as enunciated in the Millennium Declaration. Myanmar is among the first countries to embrace the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We acknowledge the universality and indivisibility of human rights. At the same time, Myanmar also gives priority to the right to development.

My country is making every effort to fulfil the fundamental rights of its citizens. The rights of women, children, the sick, the aged and other disadvantaged members of society are closely protected. The Myanmar Human Rights Committee was established to ensure the inalienable rights of our citizens. My Government is cooperating with the United Nations human rights bodies, the Special Rapporteur and other experts in the field. The International Committee of the Red Cross has free and unfettered access to prisons nationwide.

The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration inaccurately cites Myanmar as one of the countries "where resistance to democracy is strong, even though the majority of the people clearly desire change" (*A/58/323, para. 85*). We are greatly perplexed by this. Insofar as Myanmar is concerned, nothing is further from the truth. My Government is firmly committed to the attainment of democracy in Myanmar. We have the political will for a systematic transformation into a democracy.

On 30 August 2003, the new Prime Minister of my country, in his first official address to the nation, outlined a road map that would firmly guide Myanmar to democracy. If the promotion of democracy is truly the desire of the international community, the Myanmar road map ought to be welcomed and encouraged. For

our part, we are firm in our resolve to implement the road map to democracy to its successful conclusion.

Mr. Gallegos (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the way in which you are guiding the debates of the General Assembly and to reiterate that we stand ready to cooperate with you.

At the outset, I would like to support the statements made by the permanent representative of Peru, on behalf of the Rio Group and by the permanent representative of Morocco, on behalf of Group of 77.

I believe that the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization and on the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit will enable us to give further thought to the Organization's objectives at a time when the Member States that created the United Nations should be examining themselves and adopting the necessary political decisions to reform the architecture of the international institutions so that they may meet the challenges of the world in which we live.

I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General for his reports and commend the fact that they contain recommendations for dealing with the historic events that humanity is experiencing today. My delegation agrees with the Secretary-General that radical reform of the multilateral institutions is necessary.

Ecuador believes that it is necessary to reform the United Nations and has done its utmost to reach consensus to make headway on the path to structural and substantive reform. This is not an easy endeavour. There are differences among Member States over the reform of the United Nations, as well as on the need to revitalize the General Assembly. There can be no doubt that any reform requires the political will of the Member States, and we should make every effort to ensure that world leaders understand the need for a substantial change in multilateral institutions.

If the Organization is to remain relevant, we must accept that not only procedural but also substantive change is needed. The people of the world look to the United Nations with hope. That hope has been shaken many times, because utopias and idealism clash with reality. International politics is based on interests rather than principle or law. Accordingly, it is crucial to harmonize the interests of all Member States with of a vision of a world that is more equitable, just and humane.

As we ascend the stairs to this Hall, we can admire two impressive murals depicting war and peace, well-being and poverty. During the 50-year history of the Organization, we have not been able to resolve the violent conflicts that affect innocent human beings every day. It is not enough to make rhetorical statements to stop the terrible atrocities, in which knives and machetes become weapons of mass destruction. Thousands of victims of mutilation, rape, torture and assassination attest to the ineffectiveness of the system. This cannot continue. This is not ethical.

The revitalization of the General Assembly should not be limited to simplifying mechanisms and reducing the number of items that are discussed. We should return to the origins of the United Nations and make the general debate the gathering place for the political will of the heads of State or Government to come together to reach solutions to the complex problems of humanity. This is the forum in which debate and the quest for universal consensus should occur. I believe that it would be desirable to make decisions agreed upon by the General Assembly binding on the State Members and other international actors.

The reform of the Security Council should go beyond increasing the number of its members. There should be fundamental change that, as the Secretary-General has said, responds to the political realities of the twenty-first century. The present dangers in the world stem not only from States, but also from transnational terrorist organizations, organized crime and institutionalized violence. The Security Council must change because the world has changed.

The Economic and Social Council should be able to respond to a vision of a world that is integrated and globalized in its international relations. Today, all of us are citizens of the world. We are 6 billion people, and half go to bed hungry, which is also unethical. The developing countries would be less poor if the developed countries stopped subsidizing their agricultural products by $1.2 billion a day. The dignity of a human being is found in his work, and we cannot reach this goal if artificial barriers are created that doom us to poverty. Here lies the central role of the United Nations: achieving justice and equality.

Reform can be postponed no longer; we have discussed it for many years. I belong to the school of thought of Arnold Toynbee, who maintains in his monumental *Study of History* that in the annals of

history, the civilizations that disappeared did so because they were unable to adapt to change. Change, as Heraclitus maintained, is constant. If we do not change the multilateral structure of the United Nations and its specialized agencies so that they respond to the needs of our peoples, we will have condemned to failure the greatest consultative effort in the history of humanity.

From this rostrum, I appeal to the representatives of Member States that all of us respond to the cries of our peoples and find the political will to adopt reforms of the international system that will enable us to provide a better tomorrow for our children.

Mr. Taha (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for having submitted the two important reports now before the Assembly. In addition, we subscribe to the statement made earlier by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The Millennium Declaration set forth ways and means of tackling the new millennium's challenges: economic and social underdevelopment, worsening poverty and rampant epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, in addition to issues of international peace and security, terrorism, organized crime and armed conflict.

Among needed reforms on which not much progress has been made, we should like to emphasize the need to reform the Security Council. Its permanent and non-permanent membership must be expanded so that it becomes more representative of the United Nations membership as a whole, and its working methods must be improved so that its decision-making process is more democratic and transparent. I believe that the Council's importance underscores the need to reflect on how to elaborate new ways to reform it. In that connection, I should like to draw attention to the bold proposal by the Prime Minister of Malaysia to improve the veto by stipulating that it be used only in conjunction with the efforts of more than one State, thereby reducing the degree of domination by permanent members.

Despite the holding of international conferences in an attempt to bring people's views closer together, there is an ever-widening gap between the rich countries of the North and the poor countries of the South. Therefore, it is imperative that we create a fair and democratic international economic order that will enable us to create better conditions for international trade between rich and poor countries, transcending the failure of Cancún by improving the amount of official assistance provided to poor countries and eliminating their external debts. We welcome the New Partnership for Africa's Development as a purely African initiative providing a framework that will enable the international community to help the continent to develop. We look forward to practical outcomes that should reflect the international will of the General Assembly to support the continent.

As a result of the economic and social conditions in the least developed countries, the international community must attach particular importance to seriously helping that group of countries to emerge from the poverty, hunger and disease that afflict them. In that connection, we should like to commend the General Assembly's decision in December 2001 to create the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to coordinate, monitor and follow up implementation of programmes of action for those countries.

We welcome the Secretary-General's statement concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms and their intertwined relationship with economic, social, political and cultural problems. In this regard, we renounce the use of selectivity, double standards and politicization of those noble principles.

The international community has responded to the appeals to fight terrorism. We agree with the States that have requested the convening of an international conference to define terrorism so that it can be distinguished from the right of peoples to struggle against aggression. In addition, we should study the root causes of that phenomenon and its hasty and unjustified linkage to a particular religion or ideology, because its victims include those of all religions, nationalities and races.

In his report, the Secretary-General indicated that Sudan has made some progress towards a timely comprehensive conclusion of an agreement. We should also like to point out that we concluded an agreement on security arrangements last September and that we hope to announce shortly the conclusion of a comprehensive settlement on an end to the civil war in Sudan.

Mr. Schurti (Liechtenstein): Liechtenstein welcomes the Secretary-General's reports on the work of the Organization and on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. In particular, we appreciate his keen eye for those areas in which we — the Member States that make up the Organization — are faltering in our commitments and political will.

To be sure, the past year was a uniquely challenging one for the Organization, but we must recognize that it was not outside circumstances or disasters that caused what has come to be perceived as a crisis. In fact, the toughest challenge for the Organization came from within the membership. If the crisis originated within the membership, the solution will also, of course, be found among and by the Member States.

We remain firmly convinced that an Organization that is strong and is perceived as such by everyone is in the best interests of all Member States. It would indeed be tragic if the international community lost its capacity for multilateral cooperation, while its enemies have understood the strength of cooperation and organized themselves in destructive ways such as terrorist groups.

Last year we pointed out that it might be surprising for the Secretary-General to make strong calls for multilateralism before an audience that should epitomize multilateralism to the peoples of the world. However, the events of past months have made it abundantly clear that the crisis the Organization experienced in connection with the disagreement on the proper course of action against Iraq is no less than a crisis of multilateralism. Member States seem to have fallen out of step with world public opinion, which clearly favours joint multilateral efforts under the rule of law.

It is one of this Organization's great success stories — as the world's premier standard-setting body — that the rule of law could be promoted to the extent that today, nearly everywhere in the world, there is a strong sense of human rights and the rule of law. It is a sad irony that the observance of international law suffered setbacks because this Organization — and the Security Council in particular — finds it difficult to live up to its role as the guardian of the rule of law.

Legitimacy, in accordance with international law, is the outstanding quality of this Organization, guaranteeing credibility and acceptance. We must not gamble away this unique feature; rather, we are called upon to protect it. The crisis the United Nations has been going through in connection with the action taken against Iraq will not be ended by pragmatically returning to business as usual. Indeed, the Organization could be further harmed if it continues to operate in Iraq without a stronger and more comprehensive part to play. The perceived legitimacy and impartiality of the United Nations must not further be compromised. The Organization, in particular its employees on the ground, must not be put in a position where those on whose behalf it is acting perceive it to be serving interests other than those provided for in the United Nations Charter. We are convinced, however, that, when entrusted with a clear and strong mandate in Iraq, the United Nations will be able to live up to the supreme role afforded it by international law.

Liechtenstein applauds the Secretary-General for his ongoing reform work within the Secretariat, United Nations agencies and the operational activities of the system. Secretariat reform has been largely successful thus far, and we fully support his continuing work in this regard. As a Member State, we recognize that we can and should contribute more to making the United Nations system, and in particular intergovernmental bodies, more effective. A group of eminent personalities, as proposed by the Secretary-General, will be able to provide us with a fresh view on necessary steps to improve the functioning of this Organization.

Having said that, it is clear that no group of personalities, or other group, can make the necessary decisions on our behalf. In some areas, we have long recognized and come to an agreement on the fact that changes need to be made. We must now muster the political will to actually take the first step. As for the Security Council, after 10 years of debate, the time has come to move beyond improving its working methods and to make the structural changes needed. The Security Council must be made more representative to reflect demographic and geopolitical realities and to make it more credible. The privileges and responsibilities in the context of the decision-making process among the membership of the Security Council need to be adjusted.

Of course, only the General Assembly can undertake such work at the foundations. To start out, the General Assembly should assume its rightful role vis-à-vis the Security Council, in accordance with the

Charter, and deal more vigorously with pressing issues at hand. We will therefore support you, Mr. President, in your initiative to revitalize the General Assembly.

There seems to be a common perception that the main purpose of the United Nations is to maintain peace and security in the world. Historically, this is certainly understandable. Yet, even in the Charter of the United Nations, it was clearly recognized that peace and security are not, indeed cannot be, stand-alone areas of work. Working towards peace and human security must go in tandem with promoting human rights and advancing social and economic development. Consistently, the Charter provided that the work of the United Nations would have to encompass the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for the obligations arising from international law, the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, as well as the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples. Peace and security remain hardly imaginable without continuous work in all these areas.

Over the years, the General Assembly, particularly through conferences and summits, has forged an impressive set of legal instruments and adopted declarations and programmes of action that can serve us well in tackling the world's problems. Most recently, the standard-setting culminated in the Millennium Declaration, including the Millennium Development Goals, in which States reaffirmed the vision outlined in the Charter, spelling it out in concrete and specific terms relevant to our times. The Millennium Development Goals reflect the recognition that poverty remains a serious threat to peace and security.

That is to say that the Organization has been quite effective in defining problems and outlining the required responses. However, it does not reach the same level of effectiveness when it comes to the implementation of its own programmes of actions towards clearly defined goals. In following through, our performance is uneven. Thus, when talking about working to make the Organization more efficient, Member States must bear in mind that, in the end, their performance determines the success of the Organization. The success and, as a consequence, the credibility and legitimacy of the United Nations depends on the willingness of its Members to live up to the consensus declarations and commitments.

Mr. Savua (Fiji): The Millennium Declaration remains a milestone road map to help us focus more sharply on the development agenda for the twenty-first century. The lessons learned in the United Nations system since its inception have shaped a common vision of humankind, with the aim of bringing about a more peaceful, prosperous and just world, as detailed in the Declaration.

The Secretary-General's observations, in the two reports he submitted under items 10 and 60, on the constrained movement of the global community and by Member States in moving towards the set targets are very welcome, timely and constructive. The reports are helpful also in identifying obstacles and challenges. We agree with the need for radical institutional reforms. We heard many creative and practical suggestions during the general debate in this connection and consider it incumbent upon the presidency, in collaboration with the Secretary-General, to take on board those suggestions for institutional reforms and reforms in the working methods and in the substance of its various organs and bodies, for a total reinvigoration.

On its own, the world leaders' Millennium Declaration cannot stop or counter the threats to international peace and security that are being unleashed. Such threats are no longer confined to areas of conflict or crisis, as the events of 11 September and subsequent attacks exemplify. Even the United Nations is now a direct target for terrorist attacks, as evidenced by the Baghdad tragedy.

This week, the United Nations continues its deliberations in the Sixth Committee on how best to combat international terrorism through diplomatic channels, which continue to be obstructed by political differences. The Security Council's path, through its Counter-Terrorism Committee, has earned the respect of and rapport with Member States in implementing resolution 1373 (2001). While that route is cementing the anti-terrorism groundwork at the national and regional levels, clearly a political solution is now imperative to boost the fight against international terrorism.

Without excusing wanton and cowardly acts of terrorism against the lives of innocent people, meeting the Millennium Development Goals is a significant start to fighting terrorism. Meeting the Goals would uplift the quality of lives and thereby serve to uproot

the adverse social, economic and human rights conditions in which terrorist tendencies flourish.

Displacing those adverse conditions and tendencies and substituting them with a more enabling and empowering socio-economic environment will more than satisfy global collective commitments to the conferences and summits of the past decade, dating back to Rio and reaffirmed in Johannesburg. Meeting the Goals would help us, led by the United Nations, to realign the shifting planes which have been thrown into discord by globalization, as a result of which not only has trade balance been skewered, but many other global imbalances have become rapidly entrenched.

The tragedy is that not only are these global imbalances being felt at the global level and not only are the forces of globalization making the rich richer and the poor poorer on the global scene, but that the divide is even more pronounced and accentuated at the national level and across borders. This is a sure recipe for internal conflict, destabilization and terrorism and a distraction to the national Governments of developing countries — especially the least developed countries and small island developing States like my own country, Fiji — from our commitments to improving the quality of lives of our citizens.

While all the success stories of the United Nations peacekeeping role in Bougainville, East Timor, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Kosovo and other peace-building efforts are causes for celebration and reflection, they cannot give us the holistic global solution or the overall change in paradigm that the international community needs to implement collectively in order to find lasting solutions.

Some fatigue or lethargy may have crept into the Organization over decades of peace operations. The reforms in the peacekeeping sector alone that were recommended by the Brahimi report, although they may build on aspects of human rights and gender components, cannot bring lasting solutions without the radical reforms that the Secretary-General speaks of in order to keep alive hopes for multilateralism in this century. While Fiji looks forward to the Secretary-General's high-level panel on institutional reforms, we also trust that the panel will be convened following full consultations with regional groups and partners.

We need to see the United Nations taking a balanced approach to peace and security that can enhance Member States' commitment to the World Summit on Sustainable Development outcomes, in particular through the commitments of the developed partners to assisting home-grown development initiatives of developing partners. We also advocate global responses for global programmes, as with HIV/AIDS, multilateral trade or sustainable development.

In an ideal world, peace and security can be realized only by building trust among nations and States. States large and small must be enabled to participate meaningfully in the United Nations. We cannot do so by expanding the agenda of the United Nations in an exponential manner, leaving small and resource-poor States extremely limited in the issues and areas in which they can participate, while the basics remain to be satisfactorily addressed by this Organization. This trend in the United Nations grossly disadvantages us developing countries in numerous ways, leaving us engaged in a catch-up mode.

Developing countries hold some 80 per cent share of the global population and a still higher rate of the world's poverty statistics. Bearing this picture in mind, there are two options for this Organization. We can keep going as we have these past 50-odd years and maintain the status quo, or we can leave lasting footprints for the holistic changes we intend to make in this Organization or for reaping some value from the annual assessed contributions that we can ill afford to pay, both to the United Nations and to its related bodies and agencies, and which we need to see making a difference.

Fiji therefore embraces fully the opening statement with which you, Sir, inspired our leaders in opening the general debate and the many practical and forward-looking suggestions proffered by your delegation and by the many delegations that followed suit during that debate. In the same vein, we want to congratulate the Secretary-General on his astute assessment of shortcomings in the Organization and his perceptive recommendations for reform. We stand ready to support these efforts.

Mr. Moleko (Lesotho): Let me pay a well-deserved tribute to you, Sir, for your election to preside over this body during the fifty-eighth session. My delegation will cooperate with you to make this session a successful and memorable one for the future of our generation.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for a very thoughtful and comprehensive report on the work

of the United Nations and the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit. The challenges faced by our Organization have been very clearly set out by the Secretary-General. The Millennium Development Goals set three years ago show that the international community is indeed focused on the right and achievable objectives. The attainment of these objectives is, however, proving to be elusive because of the lack of political will and because of protectionism. The most intractable of these Goals is that of combating HIV and AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases. This Goal is proving to be a challenge because of extreme poverty. We are also failing on the Goal of halving the proportion of people whose income is less than $1 per day. Poverty is still the biggest problem that we need to address. Any positive gain over it will necessarily translate into achievement on the other Goals, because there is an isomorphic mapping between poverty and the escalating HIV/AIDS infection rate.

We are failing to meet the targets that we set for ourselves and, in the process, have relegated some regions of the world to doom and possible disappearance. Sub-Saharan Africa is facing the greatest threat humankind has ever had to face. The Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria does, however, represent a real hope for those nations to address this problem. Governments have developed strategies to slow down the spread of the disease and, as Prime Minister Mosisili of Lesotho, has said:

> "The political will is very strong. What we need are resources and capacity-building. But the fact that we have no capacity — as we have been told ad nauseam — cannot and must not be used as an excuse for denying us resources." (*A/58/PV.3, p. 8*)

Our house is on fire and the neighbours who have water must come and help extinguish the fire to save our homes. We need the resources to help build the very capacity that we have been told we do not have.

The relevance of the United Nations in the wake of the escalating wars and internecine conflicts is a lemma requiring no mathematical proof. The startling terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 on the United States, the ensuing war on terrorism, the Iraq war and the recent attack against Syria in the name of the war on terrorism, show how much we in this Organization need each other. The founding fathers of our Organization learned from the two world wars that peace and international security could not be achieved through unilateralism. The lessons they learned then are as relevant today as they will be in the future.

The Middle East situation continues to show that unilateral actions by some States lead only to further insecurity in all the countries of the region. We recognize that, under Article 51 of the Charter, any country when attacked has an inherent right to self-defence. But unprovoked attacks on weaker nations are unacceptable. If States need to resort to force to resolve threats to international peace and security, they need the sanction of this Organization to legitimize their actions.

The general debate, which concluded recently, strongly endorsed multilateralism and reaffirmed that the United Nations remains the only Organization available to all nations, big and small, to address global issues, including terrorism, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty and, of course, the challenges of globalization. My delegation would like to express its unwavering support for the General Assembly as the central body best able to address these world problems. It is thus necessary to direct our collective efforts at strengthening it, while maintaining its character as a body in which all States continue to have equal powers. We support the Secretary-General's call for the reform of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. We support his idea of appointing a panel of eminent persons to study this important issue and report at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that the persons he appoints will not only be eminent and knowledgeable, but will also reflect the face of the international community.

The reform of the Security Council — a body whose decisions bind all Member States, yet one in which only five out of 191 States have real power — is an issue that needs immediate attention. Mathematically, that figure represents just 2.6 per cent of the total membership of the United Nations. If the 10 elected members are factored in, that figure rises to 7.9 per cent. We all know that one Member State with the power of veto can thwart the will of the entire international community. Yet one Member State represents 0.5 per cent of the membership of the United Nations.

The Security Council is unrepresentative, and it needs to be reformed. In addressing this issue in his

statement to the General Assembly on 24 September, the Prime Minister of Lesotho, said:

> "It has been almost 10 years since the establishment of an open-ended working group to study all questions relating to equitable representation in the Security Council, including increasing the membership of the Council. My Delegation is of the view that there is an urgent need to accelerate the pace and to redouble our efforts to bring this matter to a conclusion. Let us face it: the very concept and practice of a veto in the Security Council is simply untenable and is totally at variance with the democratic principles of our modern times. For one member with a veto to overrule 14 others is simply undemocratic. It is patently unjust and contrary to every principle underpinning fair play and world order." (*A/58/PV.10, p. 20*)

I would like to echo those words of wisdom by my Prime Minister, and call for urgent action to bring the 10-year-long discussions of the open-ended working group to a close. We need to take action now on the many recommendations and ideas thus brought to the table.

Ms. Peksa-Krawiec (Poland): During the general debate, as well as in the current debate under agenda items 10 and 60, all speakers have underlined the need for bold, far-reaching and courageous steps if we want to preserve the United Nations as a relevant and vital Organization — an Organization that serves all of its Members, one that is able to respond to current threats and is ready to tackle all the new challenges of the twenty-first century.

We share the belief expressed by many delegations here that it is the strong commitment of all Member States to effective multilateralism which is needed if the United Nations system is to retain its unique and important role as the central forum for international cooperation.

Poland fully aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Italy, speaking on behalf of the presidency of the European Union, on the first day of our discussion on the reports on the outcome of the Millennium Summit and on the work of the Organization. As he said, we attach great importance to the principles and objectives set out in the Millennium Declaration and to all the issues addressed in it — questions relating to peace and security, development, human rights, democracy and good governance.

We hope that Member States will share the observations and conclusions contained in the reports of the Secretary-General and not only support the ongoing process of reform but also search for new ideas and concepts which will help to move forward the implementation of the Goals set out in the Declaration, strengthen multilateral mechanisms and confirm the position of the Organization as the most important institution of international security and cooperation.

A new vision of a more effective international order and collective security requires a new political consensus, especially in the light of recent events. This very conviction was the foundation of the proposal put forward during the fifty-seventh session by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland, Mr. Wladzimierz Cimoszewicz, to launch a New Political Act relating to the United Nations at the dawn of the twenty-first century — a document which would provide fresh impetus for strengthening the principles and reinforcing the mechanisms of the United Nations system. Let me express our satisfaction with the fact that the Polish initiative corresponds with the position outlined by the Secretary-General at the outset of the general debate of the current Assembly session.

My country fully supports the proposal to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities that would examine the role of collective action against current security challenges and review the operation of major United Nations organs. We are ready to give our full support to this body, as well as to help out in its endeavours.

Earlier this year, while consulting on our initiative, we collected a substantive body of thought, which was then reflected in the memorandum of the Government of the Republic of Poland. We are ready to share this and other documents with the panel, in the hope that it could make a substantial contribution and act as a good starting point for its deliberations and work.

We certainly expect the final document — the report of the high-level panel — to focus in a conceptual and holistic way on the nature of changes in the international system and provide a vision of a more effective international order. The report should in our opinion contain answers to questions posed by present challenges, including security risks related to

globalization and non-State actors, development gaps, international solidarity and good governance.

The high-level panel might at the same time formulate the reflection on the values and principles that bind the international community together and define the behaviour of States towards one another, towards other actors on the international scene and towards citizens. At the same time, we hope that the recommendations of the panel will reflect the need to further strengthen United Nations capacities in the fields of the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and that the United Nations mechanisms and instruments for providing peace, security and stability throughout the world will also be reviewed and enhanced.

We look forward to the Secretary-General's recommendations based on the work of the panel. We hope that they will give a fresh impetus to further conceptual thinking and reform of the United Nations system. We cannot, however, just sit and wait for the outcome of the deliberations of the eminent persons. While supporting their work, we must continue to strive for the smooth and timely implementation of the reforms already agreed upon. We have to intensify our efforts to make the daily work of the Organization more effective and fruitful. United Nations reform is not only the domain of high-level political initiatives; it is also a part of the everyday work of all of us in all forums.

We would like to urge the functional committees of the General Assembly to continue consideration of the reform package on a priority basis. From that perspective, the adoption of a new programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 which supports the full implementation of the Miliennium Declaration and the reform process will be of crucial importance. In our opinion, the Secretariat and other United Nations bodies should also continue and further strengthen the reform processes.

Poland strongly believes that, at the same time, we should search for ways to improve the work and the outcomes of the Security Council. Similarly, the role and working methods of the Economic and Social Council should be, in our opinion, reviewed and strengthened.

Finally, it is our conviction that, especially this year, Member States should engage more strongly in a process of revitalizing the General Assembly. We all agree that the Assembly should be given the most important political role in a global debate, but to achieve that we must make this body more effective, capable and strong. There are many proposals put forward in this context; we already have a basis to build upon. We therefore hope that, during this year's debate, under your leadership, Mr. President, we will be able to take bold decisions in this regard.

Echoing the appeal of the Secretary-General that we seek agreement on how to make the United Nations an Organization for our times, I should like to assure the Assembly that, in the course of this session, our delegation will do its best to contribute to the achievement of that goal.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on these items for this meeting.

Several representatives have requested to exercise the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I am going to make a statement in exercise of the right of reply to the statement made yesterday by the representative of Japan on the nuclear issue.

The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is the outcome of the United States hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Japan does not contribute at all to its settlement by running amok to bring international pressure to bear on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The United States is threatening a pre-emptive nuclear attack on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Japan is actively taking sides with the United States, laying bare its ambition of re-invading Korea and pronouncing its right to strike pre-emptively at military bases in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Before all these threats, how can the Democratic People's Republic of Korea lay down its war-deterrent force? The Iraq war taught the world the grave lesson that nobody on Earth — not even the United Nations — can protect weak and small nations from armed aggression by a super-Power.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea sternly warns Japan to discard its delusion of catching fish in the troubled waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States nuclear confrontation. Japan's anti-Democratic People's Republic of Korea frenzy will serve only to severely damage its own interests.

As for Democratic People's Republic of Korea-Japan relations, these will be possible only when Japan compensates for its past crimes on the Korean people. It is really foolish for Japan to think that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is so impatient to improve relations with Japan that it would compromise its principles and national interests. This is the core of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-Japan Pyongyang Declaration. The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is disappointed that Japan is incapable of understanding this simple logic.

My next point is that it is despicable for Japan to talk of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-Japan Pyongyang Declaration. Japan should, if nothing else, break itself of the bad habit of betraying its dialogue partner. Japan should try to earn its credibility in the eyes of the international community.

Mr. Mekel (Israel): I regret to take the floor in exercising this right of reply to comments by certain delegations that have abused the debate in the Assembly to further their narrow political agenda. Representatives who express such concern when Israel exercises counter-terrorism measures in an act of self-defence, but fail to express even the faintest whisper of concern when dozens of innocent lives are lost at the hands of terrorists groups and the States that sponsor them, had best take a good look in the mirror.

Such failure to expressly condemn the deliberate murder of innocent civilians speaks to a double standard that for too long has plagued the agenda of the Assembly. The fact that it is not the loss of 19 innocent lives in a Haifa restaurant, not to mention the hundreds of other victims of Palestinian terrorism, that moves certain representatives to speak or act, but rather Israel's defensive response to such aggression against a terrorist training facility speaks volumes about the values and intentions of such speakers.

Syria, a dictatorship which occupies a neighbouring State and which is known for sponsoring, financing and harbouring terrorism in violation of the most basic norms of international law, should be the last to speak of justice and law. The Syrian representative likes to preach reverently about his support for so-called resistance. Perhaps he can explain how exactly the attack in Haifa, perpetrated by an organization which Syria sponsors, harbours and supports, and which took the lives of so many innocent children and babies, serves as an act of legitimate resistance?

Perhaps he can explain how exactly the attack in Haifa, perpetrated by an organization which Syria sponsors, harbours and supports, which took the lives of so many innocent children and babies, serves as an act of legitimate resistance? Perhaps he can explain how the Syrians themselves have dealt with resistance, as in the case of Hama, where some 10,000 civilians were murdered by Syrian armed forces? Or perhaps he can explain what steps his Government has taken in accordance with Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and the road map itself, which calls on States to cease all support for groups that deliberately murder innocents?

To revive the peace process, and to give the road map a chance to succeed, we cannot absolve State sponsors of terror of their responsibilities to the international community and under international law. The international community must not allow any political gain from a strategy of murder that has brought suffering and despair to all peoples of the region. To do so would only encourage that strategy and push the day of peace further into the future.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): I should like to speak in the exercise of the right of reply with respect to the intervention made by the North Korean representative.

The North Korean representative misunderstands if he thinks that Japan's strong interest in North Korea's nuclear development programme is solely for the sake of siding with the United States. I have to stress that the North Korean nuclear issue is one of the utmost importance for Japan, as it is directly linked to Japanese security. Japan therefore cannot be silenced on this vital issue.

Secondly, the North Korean representative referred to possible compensation issues. I should like to draw his attention to paragraph 2 of the Pyongyang Declaration, which was duly signed by the leaders of both countries and which states:

> "Both sides, pursuant to the basic principle that when the bilateral relationship is normalized, both Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would mutually waive all their property and claims and those of their nationals that had arisen from causes which occurred before August 15, 1945, decided that they would discuss this issue of property and claims concretely in the normalization talks."

I should like to emphasize that it is our position to engage in the normalization of diplomatic relations with North Korea through a comprehensive solution of all the outstanding issues, such as the nuclear issue, the missile issue and the abduction issue.

Mr. Nakkari (Syrian Arab Republic) *(spoke in Arabic)*: We were not surprised by the manner in which the Israeli representative began his statement. He immediately condemned all those countries that have already denounced the wanton act of aggression that took place on 5 October against a peaceful Syrian village. That shows a mentality that supposes anyone with different beliefs to be an enemy.

A few days ago, from this very rostrum, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel requested the General Assembly to review its approach and methods of work and to cease adopting resolutions that call on Israel to be committed to international legitimacy. That shows the logic and nature of that entity and the way in which it deals with its neighbours.

The false claims that have been made are not new to this audience, and we regret the fact that we will have to respond to them on yet another occasion.

Israel's supposed concern for peace is hard to believe, since the current Government of Israel is a war Government that has not refrained from killing men, women and children or from demolishing houses and confiscating lands. We have quoted from the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization regarding the suffering of 1.3 million people due to Israeli practices. Those people now live under the poverty line.

The report also notes that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East cannot fulfil its mandate because of the policy of siege and closures. That country knows only war and violence, exports its internal crises to other countries, and has consistently attempted to kill the chance for peace.

The international community had been discussing the possibility of finding a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. But Israel has sabotaged that possibility, and is now trying to compel the world to discount the option of a peaceful solution.

The option of peace as a strategic choice — a choice that has been made by all the countries of the region except Israel. That also was alluded to in the report of the Secretary-General.

Syria also recalls that it has consistently called for a peace based on resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Madrid framework, the principle of land for peace and other agreements reached by both parties, in addition to the Arab peace initiative presented at the Beirut Arab Summit. These are the same bases that the Secretary-General mentioned in his report.

Other false and misleading claims were made about Syria's occupation of Lebanon. I believe that it is insolent for anyone to make such false claims. These are two peoples, two brotherly Governments, that have agreed on different measures that suit both of them. This is a case in which two Governments are legitimately represented and have chosen freely. The accusations against them are sheer insolence.

With regard to the other allegations made about the Government of Syria, I can say only that the Government commands the respect of the Syrian people. We believe that was the main reason for Israel's act of aggression. We are proud of our leadership and our Government.

Our leadership is as close as can be to the Syrian street's ambitions and to the hearts and minds of the Syrian people. It wants to work for peace, not to be subjected to such horrible acts of aggression. That is what we mean when we say that Israel can export only violence and destruction to its neighbours.

I should like also to recall that it is well known that the democratic Israeli system has been able to elect only war criminals — Yitzhak Shamir was one of the accused in the assassination of Count Bernadotte, a symbol of the United Nations. Is the current Prime Minister of Israel any better? Both of them have been members of organizations such as Hagganah and Stern, two organizations that have spread terror in the region — terror that was unprecedented before Israel existed.

Is occupation not the worst kind of terrorism and oppression — killing children and civilians, bombing them, destroying their houses and shooting missiles at them from fighter jets? In addition, thousands of people have been displaced because of all those acts of aggression.

I should like here to refer once again to the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization. I would also like to add that the claim that Syria is responsible for the loss of nineteen lives is baseless and groundless. It attempts to find justification for a Government that is facing serious crises internally and exports them to other countries in the form of false claims.

In Syria, we have more than half a million Palestinian refugees who dream of going back home. Some of them still keep the keys to their homes. Who is denying them the right to return? It is Israel, in a clear and blatant violation of international legitimacy and of all United Nations resolutions, including resolution 194 (III) of the General Assembly.

If Israel considers these half million refugees as a cause of terrorism, then I can simply say that if those people were allowed to return to their homes, the crisis would be solved. Does Israel have the courage to take such a step, to allow them to return to their homes? Geographically, and for all practical purposes, half a million Palestinians who used to have normal lives are now accused of terrorism whatever they do. Even when the press pays attention to them, it is considered by Israel as terrorism.

The President: I call on the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his second intervention, not to exceed five minutes.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The representative of Japan said that Japan is concerned about the nuclear issue of the Korean peninsula. But I would like to ask Japan, is it not true that Japanese authorities, including ministers, are clamouring for a pre-emptive strike against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea? Is it not true that Japan is revising their so-called peace constitution to endorse aggressive war against neighbouring countries? Is it not true that Japan is reviving militarism? So I can say that the concern for security is of Japan's own making.

Now Japan is suppressing the activities of Chongryon, the General Association for Korean Residents in Japan. Japanese authorities are inciting terrorists to fire guns at the Koreans in Japan. Japanese authorities are conniving to have terrorists plant bombs in Chongryon's buildings. Japanese authorities are hindering the business activities of Koreans in Japan. All these issues are bringing the situation to the point of conflict. As for diplomatic relations, there will be no normalization of relations between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as long as Japan does not compensate us, abrogate its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and correct its betrayal.

The President: I call on the representative of Israel for his second and final intervention of five minutes.

Mr. Mekel (Israel): I regret that I have to exercise my right to a second intervention to reply to the Syrian representative, who today chose to turn this important debate on the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit and the report of the Secretary-General into a series of attacks against the State of Israel. And now he pretends to be surprised that he is getting the reply that he deserves.

The Syrian representative claims that Israel attacked a peaceful Syrian village. If that were not so sad, it would be amusing, because it is always very amusing when one sees a wolf in sheep's clothing. Let me say a few words about what Syria is doing about terrorism. First of all, the encouragement, safe harbour, training facilities, funding and logistical support offered by Syria to a variety of notorious terrorist organizations is a matter of public knowledge. Among the many terrorist groups that operate under and benefit from the auspices of the Syrian dictatorship are the Islamic Jihad, Hamas, Hezbollah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. It is well known that the secretary-general of the Islamic Jihad, Ramadan Abdullah Shallah, is one of several terrorist leaders who operate freely in Damascus and receive immunity and support from the Assad regime.

Allow me to briefly detail the extent of support that Syria offers to terrorist organizations. This is what they do: they provide safe harbour and training facilities throughout Syria for terrorist organizations such as Islamic Jihad, Hamas and Hezbollah, both in separate facilities and on Syrian army bases. Syria has

itself facilitated and directed acts of terrorism by coordinating and conducting briefings via phone and the Internet and by calling activists to Damascus for consultations and briefings. Syria uses its State-run media and official institutions to glorify and encourage suicide bombings against civilians in restaurants, schools, commuter buses and shopping malls in the State of Israel. Syria has facilitated the transfer of arms to Palestinian terrorist organizations such as Islamic Jihad by allowing the transfer of sophisticated weapons from Iran to Hezbollah through Syrian territory. These are just a few examples of Syria's complicity with terror.

On the other hand, Israel's measured defensive response to the horrific suicide bombings, directed against the terrorist training facility in Syria, is a clear act of self-defence, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter. This response comes after Israel has exercised tremendous restraint, despite countless acts of terrorism that have claimed hundreds of innocent lives and for which Syria bears direct and criminal responsibility. It comes after Israel and the international community as a whole have repeatedly called on Syria to end its support of terrorism and to finally comply with international law. It is designed to prevent further armed attacks against Israeli civilians in which Syria is complicit, with a view to encouraging Syria to resolve its dispute through bilateral negotiations, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as it legally is required to do.

The President: I call on the representative of Japan for his second and final intervention of five minutes.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): I will be very brief. I will touch on three points.

First, the North Korean representative referred to an imaginary state of affairs, as if we, in Japan, have publicly endorsed a pre-emptive strike, have started revising our Constitution or are reviving the military. I categorically deny these things. Nothing of the sort has happened in Japan.

Secondly, as for our treatment of the Association for North Korean Residents in Japan — Chongryon, if that is what it is called in Korean — I must say that not only this Chongryon but any other group of people or organization in Japan, as long as they are abiding by Japanese law, will continue to enjoy the protection of law and freedom. But if any people or organization, whether Japanese or non-Japanese, violate Japanese law, they will be punished in accordance with the law. This is quite natural.

Thirdly, I would like to repeat that the Pyongyang Declaration was duly signed by the Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Koizumi, and Chairman Kim Jong Il. Given all of the important issues referred to in that Declaration, I would like to suggest to the North Korean representative that he read it very carefully.

The President: I call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his second and final intervention of five minutes.

Mr. Nakkari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We were planning to refrain from taking further part in this polemical exercise, but I am intrigued by the representative of Israel's use of the expression, "The wolf has become the victim". I do not know how many more thousands of Arabs need to die in our region in order for the representative of Israel to consider the situation to be fair and just.

I would like to quote from a story that appeared in the Israeli newspaper, *Maarif*, about 20 children who were playing in an amusement park and suddenly began shouting, "Death to Arabs", while their families looked on with amusement. Another article from the same newspaper states that such scenes are common. The article also reports a conversation between two people who, discussing the fact that 50 people had been killed, expressed the wish that that number had been a hundred.

Rabbi Goldstein and Rabbi Schwinn, who are members of the Israeli organization Neturei Karta, have described the Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon, as an ugly personification of Zionism. When addressing a group of Arabs, Rabbi Goldstein also said:

> "We would like to say to the Arabs, in particular the Palestinians, that there is no war between them and the Jews. The real Jews have never enjoyed peace and tranquillity except with their Muslim and Christian Arab brothers before the establishment of the Zionist State."

That may give an idea of the true terrorist attitude of Israel — an attitude that has preoccupied the General Assembly and the Security Council for a very long time. Israeli terror against all the countries of the region and its policy of occupation and aggression know no limits, despite the hundreds of resolutions that

have been adopted — resolutions that would not have been renewed in the General Assembly if the settler occupier entity had abided by international law.

With regard to the claims that Syria is harbouring terrorists, I would like to state that in the 1980s we were one of the earliest victims of terrorism while others just looked on. With regard to Hizbullah, I should like to point out that, in a letter contained in document A/56/226 responding to repeated claims by Israel, we stated that the Government of Israel knew very well that Hizbullah is a Lebanese party that works on Lebanese territory, is supported by the Lebanese people and receives no instructions from Syria.

The list of excuses, lies and false claims is endless. The more than 500,000 Palestinians who are in Syria are not terrorists, but ordinary citizens who would like to return home. Yet their presence there is all it takes for the Israeli representative to claim that Syria is harbouring and supporting terrorism. Syria has information and humanitarian offices in Syria that provide services to those needy people — people who have resorted to living in Syrian territory because they are not allowed to live on their own land. We are simply asking that they be allowed to go home.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.